

## EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

TRIBUTE HONORING THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EDMUNDITE MISSIONS

**HON. TERRI A. SEWELL**

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, November 7, 2017*

Ms. SEWELL of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 80th Anniversary of the Edmundite Missions at Our Lady of Queen of Peace Catholic Church in Selma, Alabama. For 80 years the Edmundite Missions has faithfully served poor and underprivileged communities throughout the Deep South.

The Edmundite Missions, whose legal name is "Fathers of St. Edmund Southern Mission", is rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and focuses on providing food, clothing and shelter to poor and marginalized children and families, young adults and seniors of all faith traditions. Their work aims to address issues of systemic poverty in the region while sharing the hope they believe only comes through faith. While the Edmundite Mission in Alabama is headquartered in Selma, their outreach area includes the Alabama counties of Butler, Dallas, Lowndes, Monroe, Perry and Wilcox, and New Orleans, Louisiana.

The inspiring story of Edmundite Missions began with a call to action when in 1936 Pope Pius XI appealed to the Society of St. Edmund to go minister to the African-Americans of the Deep South, whom the Pope felt had been neglected by both church and state. The Edmundites responded by selecting two young priests, Father Francis Casey, S.S.E. and Father John "Barney" Paro, S.S.E., to take on the assignment. They wrote to Bishop Thomas J. Toolen of Mobile, who invited them to set up a "colored mission" in Selma.

Fathers Casey and Paro arrived in Selma on July 6, 1937, and moved into a former saloon on Broad Street. They discovered thousands of people living in extreme poverty, similar to that of a third world country. In response, they began their outreach by conducting door-to-door evangelization of the black community and building a small chapel, St. Elizabeth's Mission. Initially, they were met with skepticism and resentment by both the black and white communities in Selma. But their services to the poor gradually won them respect from the community.

The work of the Edmundite Missions helped to transform the communities of Alabama's rural Black Belt during some of the most turbulent times of race relations in American history. In 1940, the Missions welcomed the Sisters of Saint Joseph (S.S.J.) from Rochester, New York, who came to Selma to provide education and social ministry. The Sisters of St. Joseph started St. Elizabeth's School in 1941 and Holy Infant Inn (a nursing home) in 1943. In 1944, the Edmundites purchased Selma Good Samaritan Hospital, a rundown infirmary for blacks, and the Sisters set about transforming it into a modern facility. They established the Good Samaritan School of Nurs-

ing, the first medical training program for African-American women in the area.

In 1947, Father Nelson Ziter launched the Don Bosco Boys' Club (1947–1966), named after the patron saint of youth work. For the next 19 years until 1966, the club helped hundreds of black youth prepare and win the financial assistance needed to attend college. Father Ziter devoted countless hours and days to ensuring the success of every youth who came into the club.

On a personal note, I can attest to the transformative power of the Don Bosco Boys' Club. My dad, Andrew A. Sewell and many of his close friends, credit the support, love and guidance of Father Ziter for changing the trajectory of their lives. My dad and many of his teammates received athletic scholarships to historically black colleges—becoming first generation college graduates. The Club and its ministry helped to break the cycle of poverty for these African American boys such that they became teachers, doctors, lawyers and even priests. The Sewell family is forever indebted to the generous support and assistance the Edmundite Missions has given to the communities of Selma and throughout the Black Belt for over 80 years.

The Mission has a long history of seeing beyond color, creed or financial status. Their philosophy was never more relevant than during the turbulent years of the civil rights and voting rights movements. The Edmundites found themselves the center of controversy during the 1960s, when they were the only whites in Selma who openly supported the voting rights movement. During the 1950s and 1960s, the Mission and its priest and sisters worked with Selma black and white leaders, its business community and its white ministers to open the lines of communication between the races. They believed that progress could be achieved in Selma without violence or confrontations.

During the March from Selma to Montgomery, the Edmundites led by Father Ouellet, played a critical role. On March 7, 1965, the brutal confrontation at the Edmund Pettus Bridge caught the attention of the nation. Scores of wounded marchers poured into the emergency room at Good Samaritan Hospital, where doctors, nurses and Sisters worked around the clock to address the crisis. Good Samaritan Hospital won national praise for its treatment of the victims of the infamous Bloody Sunday confrontation, including providing medical treatment to our colleague, Congressman JOHN LEWIS.

Father Ouellet left Selma in June of 1965, on orders from Archbishop Toolen of Mobile, who was angered by the Father's identification with the marchers and wanted a quieter response. When he said goodbye to his weeping parishioners, Father Ouellet urged them to remain loyal to the Church and to their dreams. "All that we do we must do with love," he told them. "Let there be no hatred, let there be no bitterness, and let there be no desire for any revenge."

Reconciliation was a long time in coming, but the Missions continued to work quietly for

reconciliation and racial progress. The "Selma Accords of 1972," which brought about significant progress in the city, was negotiated in part by Assistant Missions Director Father James Robinson.

The incredible work done by the Edmundite Missions over the last 80 years has had life-changing impacts that reach far beyond the immediate communities they support. Today the Edmundite Missions continue to work tirelessly to provide essential nutritional, education and healthcare services and programs throughout the region. In 2016 alone, the Missions provided more than 300,000 meals, helped house or assisted to clothe more than 6,000 people, aided in the healthcare of more than 2,000 people and participated in the education of more than 10,000 children.

The citizens of Selma and surrounding Black Belt counties have come a long way since 1937, when Edmundite Missionaries began their work there. For 80 years, the Edmundite Missions has partnered with distressed, underserved communities to provide direct action and assistance to alleviate the conditions of poverty in Deep South. We are stronger, more inclusive and better resourced because of their efforts.

I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating the 80th Anniversary of the Edmundite Missions and in recognizing its many contributions. May the glory of Edmundite Missions continue to grow and prosper for years to come.

HONORING MARIAN B. TASCO

**HON. DWIGHT EVANS**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, November 7, 2017*

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor an influential and dedicated woman from Philadelphia, Marian B. Tasco, a devoted public official, and former City Council representative for the Ninth District of the City of Philadelphia.

Marian Tasco has dedicated her life and career to improving the lives of others through public service. Prior to being elected to public office, Marian Tasco was a Campaign Manager for former Congressman William H. Gray, III, and served as Director of Constituent Services for Gray's Philadelphia office. She also served as an assistant to the late C. Delores Tucker, the former Secretary of State for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and earlier in her career, served as Task Force Coordinator for the Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition, under the leadership of Charles W. Bowser, Esq. Marian Tasco first went to work for the City of Philadelphia in 1959 as a clerk typist I, in the Philadelphia Police Department's Pawn Brokers Division. She was soon promoted to a clerk typist II position and was reassigned to the Registrar's Office of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Prestigiously, Marian Tasco stands out as the first African-American elected Philadelphia

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